

Critics'

THEATRE REVIEWS

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*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play during the week of December 15, 1941.

†"Golden Wings" opened Monday, December 8th, at the Cort Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Critics' Theatre Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"

NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL AND AMERICAN

Place this week's reviews with preceding weekly reviews so as to have always an up to date file of the New York Stage.

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"Golden Wings"

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THE PLAY IN REVIEW

"Golden Wings"

By BROOKS ATKINSON

POSSIBLY "Golden Wings" is a livelier play than it seemed to be last evening at the Cort a few hours after the United States had declared war. Possibly we were too preoccupied with our own affairs to surrender to a gaudy yarn about the ground life of some R. A. F. fliers. For "William Jay," whose real name is Lionel Aldous, and Guy Bolton have told the tale methodically enough, and Robert Milton has staged it well enough with an especially good performance by Lloyd Gough. Everything about "Golden Wings" seems plausible. In view of the material out of which it is written it ought to be exciting and perhaps heroic. But for some reason that this department cannot specify by name, it is grounded. It never gets very high off the stage.

Since Mr. Aldous is on active duty in the British forces—last reported in Egypt—he doubtless knows his men and their habits on the ground. He has laid "Golden Wings" in the Chilgrove Service Club in England where the fliers from a neighboring field spend their leisure hours. Apart from the usual local color,

he is writing about a flight lieutenant, Rex, who is a great man in the air and a rounder on the ground. After the horrors he has seen in France and over England, Rex has broken with his genteel past and is trying to convince his fiancée to abandon him to the more scorching pleasures of an animated camp follower.

Mr. Aldous and Mr. Bolton have meshed

this situation with a feud between Rex and a comrade he despises. It comes to suspected murder in the last act. But the roving plot seems to prove nothing except that a flier lives under abnormal strain. And although "Golden Wings" is interrupted now and then by terse orders from headquarters, it has only a platonic interest in the war. These are serial story characters against a modish background of valor in the air. Very likely, Mr. Aldous is right: R. A. F. pilots do not behave like solemn or poetic heroes when they are lounging in their club.

To give them the proper housing, Watson Barratt has designed an attractive club lounge in good taste with regulation appurtenances. Mr. Milton has staged the performance with the meticulousness and respect of a friendly schoolmaster. In the biggest part he has had, Mr. Gough, who is an excellent young actor, plays Rex with crispness and pride of character and sets the whole play on its toes when dire is present. Fay Wray plays the love-sick part of Rex's superfluous fiancée rather submissively. As the lad who is hopelessly in love with her, Gerald Savory, author of "George and Margaret," obligingly follows the old patterns.

Hughie Green, on loan from the Royal Canadian Air Force, provides the bubble and bounce with considerable satisfaction to himself, and some to others. The camp follower is played with sex and brooding by Signe Hasso from Stockholm, via Japan and the Pacific. Lowell Gilmore, Valerie Cossart, Margot Stevenson, Cathleen Cordell and several other actors play as well as the occasion requires. "Golden Wings" is a competent play in which this column has a purely academic interest.

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, December 9, 1941

William Jay and Guy Bolton Write a Play About the RAF

By JOHN MASON BROWN

THE RAF has so won and deserved everyone's grateful admiration that it is disturbing, to say the least, to have its heroism reduced to the terms of such a play as last night's Golden Wings. For William Jay's and Guy Bolton's writing in this new arrival at the Cort is at best pedestrian, and limping pedestrian at that.

Without meaning to do so at all, Mr. Jay and Mr. Bolton have clipped the wings of England's gallant fliers. The group of intrepid airmen who give their play its subject are grounded from the start. Apparently bad dialogue, poor direction and a silly plot can prove as dangerous to pilots as fogs, ice or enemy planes.

Between dog fights, the Messrs. Jay and Bolton would have us believe, the officers of the RAF are worn down by cat fights. At least, to the tune of much talk about a new and better England at the war's end, blitz love

affairs and humor calculated to turn the freshest cream, they tell how two women fight in the lounge of the Chilgrove Service Club for the love of one man.

The man in question is a heartless trifter,

supposedly a member of this aristocracy who has been changed by the war and is not worth the contest. One of the women is his boyhood sweetheart; a demure, self-righteous miss who used to play Elaine to his Lancelot. The other (the Guinevere, if you must know the worst) is a sultry foreigner who, though uniformed as an Auxiliary, appears to think that patriotic service is limited to promiscuity. The Tory ace falls in love with the latter more quickly than most employees find their way to the cashier's window. Furthermore, in the course of some wholly dull and inept antics, he is accused of shooting another of her lovers down.

If this sounds complicated, permit me to assure you that you have not heard the half of it. Nor is there any good reason why you should feel yourself denied. Robert Milton's direction is as much off the beam as is the play. Fay Wray is very pretty but uncomfortably church-basement as the noble Elaine. Signe Hasso shows, as the temptress, that she is a vivacious young woman who has plenty of animation and charm to bring to a better part. And Hughie Green is a comedian who, in spite of his hard work, will never get on my Honor's List when I have a birthday, or even when I don't. The others last night seemed as depressed by what they were doing as most of us were by what we were seeing. Even so, and in spite of Golden Wings, the RAF is all right.

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, December 9, 1941

R.A.F. Setback

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

THE sex life of the R.A.F. seems to be the subject of the foolish little play at the Cort a few hours after the United States had declared war. Possibly we Force deserves a drama of epic stature, this new work by William Jay and Guy Bolton cuts the British fliers down to insect scale, showing them as infinitesimal objects indulging in petty activities, chiefly of an amorous or schoolboy nature. With stiff upper lips, a bit of whimsy and a certain sententiousness of speech, they engage in various antics wherein the war is a sort of sex-conscious house-party, with a few interludes in which they go off to shoot at Germans or at their rivals in amours.

If the men of the R.A.F. were really like this, the chances are that the Nazis would have knocked them out of the air in a month.

Although "Golden Wings" is intended as a tribute of some sort to the Air Corps, it has selected a shoddy, as well as a dull, lot to celebrate. Chiefly it appears to concern itself

with a flight lieutenant called Rex, who gives every sign of being one of the most complete heels in the recent drama. The bravest man in the squadron is this Rex, but he is also a snob, a braggart and a devil with the women, and, while the authors try to convince us of

his innocence, they never really persuaded me that he didn't shoot down one of his fellow airmen, as charged in the third-act court martial. His adventure with a lady tramp from the Ferry Service is intended to provide spice for the proceedings, but results only in added embarrassment. When the playwrights and their heroine proclaim that Rex was still a boy at heart, I suspect them of being harsh to childhood.

The pretentious juvenility of the playwrighting that has gone into "Golden Wings" makes things difficult for the actors, and it can hardly be said that they have conquered their handicaps. Lloyd Gough strives with considerable earnestness to make the dashing Rex into a character of some sort, and almost succeeds. The most successful of the group, however, is Gordon Oliver, who does manage to make the flyer he is playing both human and bearable, although that may be due in part to the fact that he is portraying an aviator who looks upon his fellows with a bit of democratic distaste. Of the women, Miss Margot Stevenson, as a faithful wife, is the least handicapped by her part. As a tribute to the valor and spirit of the R.A.F., "Golden Wings" is hopelessly and tastelessly inept. As a play, it is a great bore.

"Golden Wings"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, December 9, 1941

'Golden Wings' RAF Dogfight With Romance Between Blitzes

"Golden Wings," drama by William Jay and Guy Bolton. Produced by Robert Milton at the Cort Theatre, New York, Dec. 8, 1941.

★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

THE breaks were against "Golden Wings" at the Cort Theatre last night. We had started a war of our own during the day. Our radio ears were still tuned to some pretty serious activities on the other side of the world. England and her heroic RAF seemed a long way off.

It was not easy, therefore, for the audience to concentrate on this RAF dogfight with Romance somewhere near London. Robert Milton, producer, has been able to create what seems to be an interestingly authentic atmosphere of life at an air field with the Spitfire pilots.

It is reasonable that they should have their romantic interludes between blitzes. It is reasonable that Rex Gardiner should fall heavily for his friend's girl, considering the kind of girl she was. Reasonable that his less physical fiancée should resent the slight and still be willing nobly to sacrifice her love for the good of the service, because of her faith in Rex.

Familiar Set-up

But in the end, and in the theatre, it all adds up to the familiar story of the two girls and a man, the same old romance touched with both a sacred and a profane love. And there is not a great deal of emotional stimulation in it.

The authors, William Jay and Guy Bolton, have done their damndest to give this situation a new twist. But inevitably, the conven-

tions of the theatre have risen to thwart them.

Otherwise "Golden Wings" is a capably staged and competently acted romance of the war. The players are mostly English, or of English training. This makes it difficult to understand them at times. That English habit of dropping the voice is as irritating as ever. But the characterizations are clearly defined and the projection forceful.

The lounge of the Chilgrove Service Club is the drama's locale. The men are young and full of spirits. A few old timers are there to represent the veterans of the first World War, which already is becoming ancient history. The nerves of the men are as taut as fiddle-strings and give off discordant wines when they snap. Rex and Tom are fellow pilots who hate each other on the ground, but fight mar-

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, December 9, 1941

"Golden Wings," or Love and Duty in the Royal Air Force

By WILLELLA WALDORF

"GOLDEN WINGS," a play about England's Royal Air Force which has been on the verge of Broadway production several times in the past year or so, finally arrived at the Cort Theatre last night under the direction of Robert Milton. It is a subject in which nearly everybody is interested these days, and many theatre-goers, no doubt, will be inclined to overlook the fact that "Golden Wings" is not a very brilliant play as long as it provides thrilling glimpses of RAF flyers between blitzes.

The scene is the lounge of the Chilgrove Service Club, now an officers' canteen and bar, once a golf club. The first act, which serves to acquaint the audience with the personnel of the squadron involved, plus a surprising number of disturbing females—some belong there, some just drop in—is entertaining enough, but the second act is less so, and the third takes a nose dive from which it is never able to recover. The play has one of the least inspired final curtains we have encountered in some time.

Like the harassed people who write all those Hollywood superfluous about flyers and flying, the authors of "Golden Wings"—William Jay (said to be a pseudonym for a Britisher now fighting abroad) and Guy Bolton—are hard up for a plot. The movie writers, however, have it relatively easy, for much of the picture footage is invariably devoted to thrilling stunt flying that provides plenty of excitement even if nothing that makes much sense transpires on the ground.

Trouble Over a Woman

Unfortunately, all of "Golden Wings" takes

place on the ground, and while there is a certain amount of zooming about overhead and some criss-crossing of searchlight beams without, the drama of the evening centers about the feud between two flyers in the same squadron who are always getting in each other's hair, and who finally have a loud dustup over a woman. In a moment of fury, Rex, the flight lieutenant, warns Tom, the pilot officer, to stay out of range when they take to the air again, and since Tom is shot down on their very next flight, Rex faces court-martial.

The young woman who causes all the trouble is Judith, a fascinating Swede who ferries planes to the field for the intrepid flyers to fly, and the triangular plot is somewhat complicated by the presence of a Kay, a farmette of the Women's Land Army, who is still officially Rex's fiancée. Kay hangs around the Service Club so persistently and is generally so neat and clean that it is hard to imagine her a tiller of the soil, until she

'GOLDEN WINGS.'

A play in three acts by William Jay and Guy Bolton; staged by Robert Milton; setting by Watson Barratt; presented at the Cort Theatre on December 8, 1941, by Mr. Milton. The cast:

Pam.....	Margot Stevenson
Bessie.....	Valerie Cosari
John.....	Lowell Gilmore
Jane.....	Cathleen Cordell
Joe.....	Edmond Stevens
Geoffrey.....	Hughie Green
Babe.....	Peter Boyne
Winks.....	William Rykey
Norman.....	Gerald Savory
Rex.....	Lloyd Gough
Tom.....	Gordon Oliver
Judith.....	Signe Hasso
Kay.....	Fay Wray
Wing-Commander Forbes.....	Evan Thomas
Hunt.....	William Packes
Dillon.....	J. W. Austin
Jeppson.....	Len Mence

violously in each other's defense in the air.

Love on the Loose

Rex takes a fancy to Tom's lady friend of the moment and wins her away from him. There is a brawl. Rex hastily advises Tom to keep out of range of his guns the next time they are in a fight.

Tom is killed in that next fight and it looks as though Rex might be responsible. Nobody knows for sure. Rex himself can't be certain, for all he knows that he had forgotten the quarrel once he was tailing the enemy Heinkel.

Lloyd Gough, forthright and capable, plays Rex with conviction. Gordon Oliver is equally convincing as the irritant Tom.

Signe Hasso, an attractive, little Scandinavian, plays the exciting Judith who causes the mixup, and plays her provokingly. Fay Wray is the nobler and more sacrificial lady.

There are a half dozen good short parts well played, notably a comedy role by Hughie Green, on leave from the Royal Canadian Air Force, and a friendly and modest fellow by Gerald Savory.

Valerie Cosari is in the cast, and J. W. Austin, both helpful. An attractive setting by Watson Barrett and nice direction by Mr. Milton.

explains finally that it's January and a sort of vacation period for the Land Army. Even so, we found it difficult to believe that in less frigid months of the year she ever did anything more vigorous than transplant an occasional geranium.

Although Miss Signe Hasso is very attractive as the Swedish aviatrix whose charms undermine the morale of the entire squadron, her role slides out from under her before the play is over. The authors, in fact, don't seem to know quite what to do with her as time goes on, so she stands around with her back to the audience, contemplating the setting, which is bound to grow very tiresome for her. Some day we should like to see Miss Hasso in a role that gives her a chance to demonstrate her talents as an actress. She comes to Broadway with an impressive career behind her in Sweden.

A Comedian From Canada

Fay Wray as Kay—she-good-girl was properly mild and upright, and Cathleen Cordell knew her way about as member of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, but "Golden Wings" is better when it is dealing with the flyers themselves, in those rare moments when the ladies are not underfoot.

Hughie Green, who, according to a program note, is on leave of absence from the Royal Canadian Air Force for this tour of duty on Broadway, is the comedian of the piece, and a funny fellow he is, too. We have no idea the Royal Canadian Air Force felt so strongly on the subject of the drama that it would assign one of its merriest wags to the cause of amusing the Times Square theatregoing crowd, but it's a lucky thing it did. Without Hughie "Golden Wings" would be a pretty sad affair. His old outfit in Canada must be missing him.

Lloyd Gough and Gordon Oliver do the petcock chasing and the quarrelling convincingly enough, and also among the uniformed personnel was Gerald Savory, who once wrote a comedy called "George and Margaret" which had a long run in London though it didn't do so well here; and Lowell Gilmore, who grew better as the evening wore on and his phony Scots accent wore off.